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II Corinthians 1:15-2:4 "A Godly Pastor Shares His Heart" January 27, 2019

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to II Corinthians Chapter 1 verse 15.

Paul had started this church where he had spent on his second missionary journey 18 months. He loved these folks. It was a very corrupt and immoral city, Corinth, and so the church had lots of problems. A lot of times these sins of the city were rolling into the church itself. Well, Paul was determined to see it through. He believed God would finish the work he began. He had spent a lot of time there. He loved the people. And maybe of all of the churches that he planted, these folks I wouldn't say meant the most to him, but seemed to move his heart the most. They were always in trouble, always kind of struggling, and they presented him with lots of trouble.

When Paul years later was in Ephesus planting the church there where he had spent three years, somebody from Corinth came through the city and told Paul how bad things were going in Corinth. It was a shock to Paul, who sent a letter to them that we don't have. We'll call it I Corinthians, because it was. They wrote back with lots of questions and very little answers. Paul then wrote what we have as I Corinthians, would have been the second Corinthian letter, and he sent it by the hand of Timothy. It was a challenge to some of the sin that was going on that was obvious. But the worst news was the false teachers that had kind of crept into power. The Judaizers were men who followed Paul for generations that were -- I should say for decades, they introduced the law and works versus faith in Christ. They were false teachers, and they were getting a foothold.

Paul had Timothy come back and say, "Oh, your letter was not even well received, but, man, the place is in trouble. People are believing and doing things that you would never approve of." And it shocked Paul. It broke his heart. He made an unscheduled trip there that we know he did, because he mentions it in these letters. He

was withstood to his face. It wasn't good. He was embarrassed and kind of made to be ashamed. It's not a picture you find much in the Bible of Paul's kind of stance in front of these folks. But he came back to Ephesus. He wrote another letter. This letter was severe. He really wanted to address those things that he saw. He sent it by the hand of Titus, who is much more kind of an aggressive personality than Timothy, and he hoped that maybe would solve it. Titus didn't come back in any kind of time that Paul was hoping for.

Paul eventually left Ephesus, went up north, crossed over the sea, and he ended up in Macedonia, northern Greece, probably in Philippi, when he ran into Titus, who said, "Hey, things are getting better. There are many of the folks that we remember from the church getting started that are walking with God again. They've turned away from the divisive kind of ways of the other. But there's still some guys that are in power, man, and I wouldn't say the place has been cleared out. Things are still troublesome." So Paul took the positive and went, well, I'm so glad to hear things are getting a little better, wrote this letter, II Corinthians. Would be the fourth letter he wrote, sent it by the hand of Titus. He would eventually end up in Corinth himself, where he'd spent several months just encouraging the people.

But the whole letter is a response to, A. The false teachers who really needed to be put into their place in the eyes of the people, because Paul was really concerned for the church; and B. They went after the people by going after Paul. If they could bring him down and discredit him, they could discredit the doctrine which he was teaching. That really was their strategy. So throughout the book Paul defends himself, not because he's worried about what people think of him -- that doesn't sound like Paul -- but worried about how that is attached to what he was teaching them, which was really important.

And so Paul was heartbroken. He loved these folks. Put yourself in his shoes. You led someone to the Lord, you prayed for them, you spent time with their family, you've counseled them through distress, and then they hear some other guy and they're taken in. And pretty soon the church is headed in the wrong direction. There's nothing you can do to stop it, and yet your heart just breaks for them. And that's kind of Paul's experience over these

last many, many months and years.

So this letter was written after hearing good news with some bad news, and Paul will use this letter to address his critics, but in the meantime encourage the saints and address things that you probably wouldn't find otherwise. But because of the pressure, you get to learn some things from God that we really do need to learn in our daily walks.

Their questions with Paul were his words trustworthy? Is he honest? Is he predictable or unpredictable? His theology was brought into question as well. And so this morning we're going to start at verse 15. We're going to go all the way to Chapter 2 verse 4, because it's one thought. I know it looks like there's a lot of verses and you'll be here till 4:00, but that's not the case. It is just a thought process that we don't want to just kind of chop up.

But Paul begins to speak to some of their complaints. This one was that he had changed his plans, and because he hadn't come like he said, he must not be dependable. That shows you how when people get angry with you, how they can make mountains out of molehills. Imagine saying of an apostle who'd spent a year and a half in your town planting a church, "Well, he changed his mind, so he's not dependable," and somehow that that works; that anyone would even bother to listen to that. But that's so often the way division works. They play off of words and try to make things worse than they could ever be, and things that aren't even there. Well, Paul's heart has such a love for these folks that even though he tells them what is wrong, which is a risk when you're trying to win them back, he does so out of a great concern for their well-being. And he's willing to suffer the hurts of standing his ground, even though it cost him plenty to see them do well. So that's what his address is going to be this morning.

In introduction to that, our society today seems to be far more interested in what people do rather than who they are. And so if you're a good football player, that's all that matters. If you're an actor, as long as you can entertain me, doesn't really matter what you do in your personal life. If you're a politician, we discount your behavior if your policies fall in line with what we're looking for. And we place performance over

principle as a culture. Unfortunately, that attitude oftentimes finds the way into the church. You will find ministry evaluated by the size of a congregation, the ability of raising funds, the extent of television or radio, or book sales, or the influential friends, here I am with so-and-so, and -- as if somehow that establishes who you are. Because we're interested not in who people are, but what they can do for us. And by the way, most false teachers do very well with that kind of criteria. They'll score very high. What we ought to know, though, is that God is not impressed with all of those things. In fact, He doesn't see as man sees. I Samuel Chapter 16, verse 7, God does not look as man, doesn't look at the outward. God is much more interested in who you are than in what you can do. In fact, if who you are is not right, what you do doesn't make any difference. Not in His economy.

I think it was the 19th Century Scottish pastor Robert M'Cheyne who wrote, "It is not great talent that God is looking for to use. It is those who have a great likeness to Jesus that He wants to raise up." Pretty interesting statement.

From a judgment standpoint, the apostle Paul was successful on everything external. He was without doubt the greatest missionary that the world had ever seen. He planted a string of churches that I would suspect no one else could claim to. He wrote 14 books of the New Testament, nine of which to churches that he had started from the ground up. He lived a life that was observably without reproach. He was able to say last week, "My conscience is clear before the Lord." And yet he was the first guy to say, "But it really doesn't matter what you or I think of me, it matters what God thinks." And in God's estimation, it isn't what a person does that makes them noble and useful, it's who he is. So this book is in many ways a defense of the genuine heart of love of Paul for the people, and a defense of his lifestyle, and his call to the Corinthians to live the same kind of life.

Well, this morning, like I said, he is going to respond to the charges he is vacillating and unreliable because he changed his travel plans a couple of times. But he's not going to just explain why he hadn't come, he's going to elevate the discussion to -- it's just a matter of the heart that drove him to make those decisions.

All right. Verse 15, "And in that confidence" -- now, the confidence is that his conscience was clear, from last week -- "I intended to come to you before, so that I might give you a second benefit -- to pass by you on the way to Macedonia and then to come again from Macedonia, to you so that you could then help me on my way to Judea." Paul says, I'm a loyal guy. If you've read I Corinthians, you know in Chapter 16 that Paul intended to leave Ephesus and go to Macedonia, which is the northern part of the Greece. Achaia is the southern. A lot of churches he had planted in the north. And then he said to them, "I'll come then in the winter and stay with you during the winter, and then from there I'll sail with the Jews over to the feast days in Jerusalem." It's a long, long trip, but they did that annually.

After writing I Corinthians, he thought he might go twice to see them. In fact, one of the letters that we don't have he makes that mention that he would come and go. He mentions it again here. "I'd like to give you a second benefit." I'd like to come, and then on my way into Macedonia I'd just stop by to see you, and then on my way out I'll stop by and see you again. That was his plans early on. He will now explain how those plans changed and how he had reverted back to some original plans. But immediately the critics pounced on this; right? "Oh, what, did you hear what he said? Oh, he doesn't mean what he said. He can't be trusted. He said he was coming, now he's not coming. Then he's going to come twice, then he didn't come at all. I rest my case." And in such a manner they sought to undermine Paul's ministry there.

But Paul wasn't a fickle guy, and I would think that anyone who had spent time with him in a year and a half as he planted this church would realize that he was a good reflection of the Lord that he served. He was also dependable. So he was going to say to them, "Look, I've been loyal to the Lord in the decisions that I've made. And I've been honest." In fact, he says in verse 17, "Therefore, when I was planning this, do you think I did it lightly? Or the things that I plan, do you think I plan them according to the flesh? So that with me there could be a yes and a yes and a no and a no? Look, God is faithful, and our word to you is not yes and no." Do you really believe I would just treat you as if you didn't matter? Shifty, opportunists, shallow? Frivolous, not

planning as well I could, trying to be clear with you the words that I speak.

It is interesting to me how when people are divided, that words and their definitions all of a sudden take on new meaning. Things that are nonsense become monumental issues. No, no, he says, verse 17, I took them seriously. I wanted to come see you. I prayed about coming there. I had made plans to do that. It wasn't a yes or no, like it didn't matter what I say. No, no, no. I was very interested in coming and I was prayerful about how I might come to see you. He'll say in verse 23 in a minute, God is my witness. He'll know what was driving me when I was doing all of these things. In fact, in I Corinthians 16, the letter before, Paul said when he talked to them about his possible plans, Lord willing or if God permits. It's kind of like, even in his letter, you go -- he said, I want to do these things if God lets me do them. There were a lot of things in Paul's letters that he writes off and goes I hope the Lord lets me do that, and the Lord didn't. You know, things didn't work out. It had no reflection of his heart. It had everything to do with things didn't come together the way that he hoped.

But notice that Paul ties his behavior, his dependability, his honesty, to verse 18, the Lord. God that we serve, He's faithful. When God says something, it isn't yes and no. When He says something, you can count on it. You're counting on it this morning. If you die today and you get to heaven and the Lord goes, "Were you born again?" And you said, "Yes, I was." And He goes, "Yeah, that doesn't matter. It was just a joke." And then sends you right to hell, you're going to go, well, that's not going to work out for me. Your life depends on God being honest; right? That He means what He says and He says what He means. And Paul's argument with the church is, I'm trying to do that too. Trying to be an accurate reflection of the God that I serve. He's not ambivalent in His promises. He doesn't talk out of both sides of His mouth. He has a reputation, and He upholds it. So should we, as Christians; right? We should live our lives in the world, regardless of what people say about us, seeking to be as the Lord. Trying to be honest and loyal and faithful to the things that God has said.

They should, I think, have known better than to believe

these wicked things about him, just because some guys coming in with new doctrine somehow are able to say so forcefully and use Paul's change of plans against him. I mean, love believes all things, but they quickly were turned. And that's what broke Paul's heart: People that he led to the Lord, he taught, now being bought in. So Paul sees himself as God's representative, and hopefully you and I do too. We should be truthful and loyal and honest to the Lord. People should not have to question what we have we say. Even though they will, but we can before the Lord say, verse 23 God's my witness, or back where we read last week, my conscience is clear.

As far as being reliable, verse 19, Paul says, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us -- by me, by Silvanus, by Timothy -- was not a preaching of yes and no, but in Him they were yes. For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." In other words, God's word, which we preached to you, was reliable. God will do what God has said. And when we preach Jesus to you, verse 19, we didn't preach Him with hidden messages or cryptic statements or word games, if you will. When we said to you He's the only way of life, it's because He is. If we said to you He's the only way of life, it's because He is. If we said to you He's the only way that you can be saved, it's because He's the only way that you can be saved. If we told you He'll never leave you or forsake you, it's because that's what He's promised to do. You came to the Lord dependent upon the gospel that we preached. Not just Paul, Silvanus or Silas; Timothy as well. You came to eternal life believing what we said.

So here's the dumb argument: You rest your eternity upon the gospel that we preached to you, but now you're doubting me because I didn't show up on time. You're taking eternal things and going, that's it, and you're turning away from nonsense for the sake of an argument or someone seeking to intervene and take you away from the truth. Look, the Lord is dependable. His gospel is dependable. Everything He says in there are yea and amen, to God be the glory. And look, we preached all of these things to you, and as a result you got saved and your life has been changed. So that's what we've tried to do in all of these things. That's how we approach anything that we do. And we've been honest and reliable in our travel plans. Look, there are some things that

came up, things that changed. God didn't permit.

He adds this in verse 21 and keep yourself in his shoes for a minute. This is a hard letter to write. "Yet now -- now He, who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us as God, He has sealed us, He's given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." Same subject God is dependable. Paul said look, besides loyalty and honesty and reliability, we're authentic believers, in the sense that the ministry God gave me, He gave me by His Spirit.

Notice he uses four words to describe what God has done in him. He established us, He anointed us, He has sealed us, and He has given to us the Spirit as a guarantee. The word "establish" means just that, to give you a place or a place of speaking. The word "anointed" means to commission or to send forth. In other words, Paul had showed up there by the direction of the Holy Spirit, by the power of God's Spirit. That's how God began this church to begin with. And the presence of God's Spirit was evident in Paul's life.

But then he gives in verse 22 a couple of things that we should, I think, grab hold of ourselves when it comes to the dependability of God's word. He says, "God has sealed us by His Spirit." The word "sealed" there is a word which means to mark ownership on or to identify. It came from the practice where most families in the first century had family crests. They were used to mark packages at the dock that weren't picked up on the same day they were delivered. They belonged to you. They were used to sign documents in wax that were signed at the bottom to declare an agreement to a contract, or a promise of payment. It's the old saying, "signed and sealed and delivered." It was the sealing that God had promised to do. And Paul said the Lord promises an eternal life, and as a result of us coming to Jesus, He put His mark on us. We belong to Him. Be kind of cool if it showed up, wouldn't it? Like on your forehead or something, "Belong to Jesus." Better it shows up in your life; right? Where people know you, see you and go, yeah, that's a believer in Jesus Christ. That was Paul's hope. Paul says, "The Lord sealed me. He put His stamp of ownership on me. I belong to Him."

Additionally, he has given His Spirit to live in my heart as a guarantee. The word "guarantee" means a pledge, or

a down payment, or earnest money, or if you will, the word "arrabon" means engagement ring. The Lord promises to marry you one day, so He put a ring on your finger. He put a ring on it, if you like the old song. He put a ring on you. He put a ring on you. He put His Spirit about your life. What He promised to you, He's going to complete in you, and you have already the first fruits of that and the taste of that, and the experience of it now. The peace of God and the insight into God's Word, and the power of God upon your life. He put His Spirit within you. If you want to know whether Jesus is sincere about His promises to fully redeem you one day, know this: His Spirit already has come to live. He's the first installment of the future glory that you're going to get. He's promised to never leave you or forsake you, and there He is with you. The finished work is coming, but He has begun it in your hearts now.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians his letter in Chapter 1, he says, "We talked to them about Jesus in whom you trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation in which you believed, in which you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of your future inheritance." God put His mark on you, put His ownership stamp, and put His Spirit on you. God made promises and you could count on them because of the actions that God took towards you in sending you the Spirit.

So He gives to those who put their faith in Him the Spirit to dwell within them, to lead them, to guide them and all. And Paul says that same Spirit sent us to Corinth to preach. That same Spirit started the church. Paul with great daringness, I think, sets his ministry and himself in the line of God and in His Word. God said things that God is going to do and Paul said, we said things we're going to do too. We've tried to represent the Lord well to you.

Well, having made that case, Paul now gives them the reason why he hadn't come earlier. And he said, verse 23, "Moreover I would call God to be a witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that I would have dominion over your faith, but that as fellow workers for your joy; by faith you'd stand." So Paul defends his integrity by saying, I just want to be a good example to the Lord in the way I speak and what I do and take it seriously like He does. He then said, to be

honest with you, and the Lord knows my heart, and may He bear witness, I didn't come to you because until Titus showed up, I was afraid that if I had to come again, I was going to have to go apostle on you. That's basically what it says. I don't want to come and lean on you anymore. I don't want to make it hard on you. He had taken it in the face on that silent and quiet trip. He didn't want to just exercise his authority. He wanted, as a tenderhearted shepherd, to kind of avoid the conflict, if at all possible. God knows, he says verse 23 that the reason I hadn't come, even though I'd planned to come, was the ability that I would have to show up and get in your faces in a way that you wouldn't appreciate.

You see, Paul wasn't used to getting pushed around. Remember, Paul was an apostle, and when God uses the apostles in a way that is unique, there was great power. Peter walks in and people dropped dead at the doorsteps of the church for lying. Or Paul walks in and there's a guy trying to keep the governor from hearing the gospel, and one word from Paul and this guy walks out blind. I mean, there was power in these men that God had raised up. And Paul said, I didn't want to do that. In fact, he writes in this book, in Chapter 13, I told you before that if I had been present with you again I won't spare those who are still living in sin. He will say to them in Chapter 13, verse 10, "I wrote these things while I'm absent from you, lest being with you I would use the sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me, not just to destroy, but to build up." And so Paul begins by saying to them, the reason I haven't come yet is because I didn't want to just get in your face. He would write, even in the I Corinthian letter, he said, "Do you want me to come next time with a rod or in love?" What do you want? Paul was no guy to be messed with, but understand his love drove him, not his authority. So notice verse 23, I didn't want to come because I wanted to spare those of you in Corinth.

Here's Paul's plan -- and we'll read as we finish this morning down the couple of verses -- he had told them everything that he knew. He had sent a letter. He had responded to another letter with the I Corinthian letter. He had made a visit and really been turned away. He had written another letter, severe letter. Sent it by the hand of Titus. There was nothing really any more that he could do than that. So Paul had a choice: Either go and clean house, and put your foot down, and maybe bring lots

of upheaval, or wait upon the Lord to have His Word take effect and the Spirit to work. And though that's a hard decision, because when you love someone or something, you always want to get involved. Waiting on the Lord is the last thing you want to do. You want to help God out.

"Well, I'm going to have a word with them."

"Well, let the Lord deal with it."

"No, no, no. I'll tell them. I will be God's mouthpiece."

And you don't always have to be God's mouthpiece. And so you want to go set the record straight, confront the accusers, deal with the problems. Let me go fix it. And Paul realized, man, I've done everything that I could. So I'm not going to go, because if I go, I'm not going to shut up, and I'm certainly not going to look the other way. That was his heart. I love these folks. In fact, he'll say that in verse 4 of the next chapter. I just love them enough to stay out of making it worse for them in the short term.

Waiting on the Lord can be difficult, and Paul was willing to wait. When Titus finally showed up and gave him the news that you can read about in Chapter 7 of this book, he will say to them, "We were so downcast until we heard from the good news that you were doing better." Paul had been on pins and needles. There was always that conflict of do I just go and take names, put my foot down, or do I just wait upon the Lord? And Paul had decided to wait. Because verse 24, "We didn't want to just have dominion over you." It's one thing to tell people what they have to do. And, like a kid or an employee or something, you can probably force people's hands. They're not happy. They'll do it. It's like the kid whose dad says, "You go sit down over there." And the kid sits down and in his mind he says, "But I'm standing up in my heart." It's that kind of deal. Paul didn't want that. He said, "I want your joy to be because you're standing by faith." That's what he hoped for. That's what he hoped to bring them to. So Paul had a lot of patience.

Saint Augustine wrote, that fellow from North Africa in the Fifth Century, he wrote, "As severity is ready to punish the false that it discovers, so love is reluctant to discover the false that it will have to punish." Severity says, let me get even. Love says, I don't want to know. I just want to love. I want to let God work.

And Paul, I know he comes across as a pretty tough guy, and I'm sure that he was, but he was ever sensitive to avoid provoking unnecessary conflict. He was only interested, verse 24, that these folks would begin to walk with God and begin with joy. That was his hope. Not to win an argument, not to prove his point, but just to make sure that he could reach them. He had a heart of a pastor for sure. So I didn't come because I didn't want another one of those weeping and yelling and confrontational times.

So he says in verse 1, "But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I made you sorrowful, then who is it that makes me glad but the one that I made sorrowful? So I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is also the joy of all of you. So out of much affliction and in anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you should know the abundance of love that I have for you." Paul ultimately wrote because he didn't want to come and cause further grief. He wanted them to do well. Now, he's not going to ignore the issues. And this letter would say to you when it comes to truth and unity, Paul will not put unity before truth. Paul will not put unity before holiness. In other words, he's going to say what needs to be said, especially in these folks that are either caught up or are misleading others. He doesn't just sweep it under the rug. He's a pretty straight-shooting guy. However, he's a man of great love. And so he's willing to try to forgo the confrontations. Having said what he needed to say, he's willing to let the Lord kind of work it out.

So he says there in verse 4, look, I, with great tears in my eyes, have written that letter, that severe letter Titus had delivered. Paul comes across as this tough kind of hard-fisted, insensitive, uncaring person, and certainly he's been portrayed like that by a lot of folks as you read through this book, but Paul's heart was far different. They misunderstood his motives. They misinterpreted his approach. But Paul clearly says, I just want you to know the joy of the Lord. I don't want to come and take you to task. I want to -- I don't want to take my authority and just beat you up with it, because that doesn't do you any good. I love you enough

to bring you to a place where I want you to just do the right thing, and then your joy can be my joy, and we can share in that together.

It is interesting sometimes that you will find in the church people who say they love the Lord, but they will tolerate the baseless kind of outgoing, obvious sin of others, and look the other way. Rather than loving them to, "Hey, bro, what are you doing? Why do you talk like that? What do you do that for?" I'm not saying run around the church as a sin sniffer. That's nobody's calling. But there's people you know that you should be able to minister to. And I find that so often, people will not pay the price for speaking up. They'd rather keep a friend than do the right thing. Paul kind of is in that dilemma. He loves these folks in a way he can't hardly express. He's got to tell them the truth, but waiting upon the Lord to work kills him, and yet that's what he's chosen to do. I think there has to be some kind of broken heartedness that causes our love to act rather than just to look the other way. Paul was not insensitive, but Paul was concerned.

Maybe it's the way that you discipline your kids is the way that we deal with being a godly person. If your kids keep running out into the street and you put them on restriction or set them in their room or give them a good talking to, it isn't because you're angry with them; it's because you love them. But it takes a rough route to kind of get to the point where that benefits them. And I thought sometimes we tolerate sin in the lives of others because we want friends. That's ridiculous. When the Father met with Adam and Eve there in Chapter 3 of Genesis, and the Lord said to Eve and to Adam, "What have you done?" And it reads like unbelief. It wasn't at all like God didn't know what they had done. But it does express the fact that the Lord knew what the consequences would be. "You realize what you've done?" And Eve said, "Well, the serpent deceived me. I ate." But the Lord's heart was, "You realize where this is leading?"

When Jesus stopped to pray over the city he wept over it in the week before He was killed, He said to the city and to no one in particular, "How often I would have gathered you together as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not, and so hereafter, here's what you can look forward to." And He talked about the slaughter in the streets and the overthrow of the city, and not one stone of the

temple being laid on another, and He talked about the consequences of them not listening to what He had to say.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "You remember how for three years I warned you day and night with tears." He said to the Philippians, "I've warned you with weeping that there's many among you that walk as enemies of the cross." I mean, there comes a time when you have to speak up if you love somebody. There's that scripture in Proverbs 27 that says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." But Paul was in this dilemma. He loved these folks. He wanted them to do well, but every word out of his mouth they could use against him, and there were people churning it up when he's not around. He didn't really want to do more than he'd done. He told them everything he knew. Now he had to wait for God to work.

So when he got the news, he went, oh, the Lord's working. So good to know. But he cared about them. That Psalm 119, that long Psalm, Psalm 119 verse 136, says, "Rivers of water run down my eyes because people will not keep Your law." That's really what I think we should have for one another, that we pray and encourage and seek to help each other stay away from the sin that so easily besets us.

Paul had a great heart as a pastor. I've been teaching - - I was thinking about this the other day -- for over 40 years now; regularly, like hundreds of times a year. And I'm usually a pretty optimistic guy, because I got into pastoring with only one conviction: If people could see the God that the Bible describes, I think that they would want to follow Him. To me as a young kid, He was so misrepresented as some angry God looking for an excuse to take your head off. But when I met the Lord, I went, "Man, people got to meet this Jesus." And so that kind of motivated me to speak and to teach. And I haven't lost that conviction that His Word will always accomplish what He wants. Growth comes slowly in just teaching the Bible, but it's usually more permanent. But I'll tell you what: The hardest thing is watching people nod and saying "Yes, Pastor, that's right," and then just completely think you're an idiot. And they ignore what you have to say and they discount what God has to say, or they use your weaknesses or feebleness against you to discount what God has said. And He doesn't fail. And it's the kind of thing that just -- you shake your head.

But press on, because God has His way and He's faithful.

I watch Paul just kind of sit and wait, and I think this letter he got must have been, oh, man, finally, some movement in the right direction. Honest, loyal, reliable, authentic, sensitive, pure, walking in love and willing to wait.

Next week, just down to verse 11. You don't have far to read. Slow down, you move to too fast.